

Racial and ethnic differences in participation in higher education

Racial and ethnic differences in college enrollment rates may reflect differences in access to and persistence in higher education for groups with varying social and economic backgrounds. Differing enrollment rates are also a leading indicator of future differences in the earnings and productivity associated with postsecondary education. The college enrollment rates for 18- to 24-year-olds are influenced by the number who enroll immediately after completing high school, the number who delay entry, and the number of years individuals in both of these groups stay in higher education.

- In 1996, white high school completers ages 18–24 were more likely to be enrolled in college (45 percent) than were their black and Hispanic counterparts. This contrasts with the mid- to late-1970s, when whites, blacks, and Hispanics showed similar rates of college enrollment. However, in 1996, blacks and Hispanics of the same age group still showed similar rates of enrollment (36 and 34 percent, respectively).
- The percentage of high school completers ages 18–24 who were enrolled in college was higher for whites and blacks in 1996 than in 1972. During this period, the college enrollment rates for whites grew substantially, rising from 33 to 45 percent, with most of the growth occurring after 1986. College enrollment rates for blacks of the same age group grew from 29 percent in 1986 to 36 percent in 1996.
- In 1996, enrollment rates in 2-year institutions were similar for white, black, and Hispanic high school completers ages 18–24. However, both black and Hispanic high school completers ages 18–24 were less likely to be enrolled in 4-year institutions than their white counterparts (see supplemental table 9-1).
- In 1996, college enrollment rates were similar for white, black, and Hispanic high school completers ages 25–34 (ranging from 9 percent for whites to 11 and 10 percent for blacks and Hispanics, respectively). The college enrollment rates of high school completers age 35 and older were also similar: 2 percent of whites were enrolled, compared to 4 percent of blacks and 3 percent of Hispanics.

Percentage of high school completers enrolled in college, by age and race/ethnicity: October 1972–96

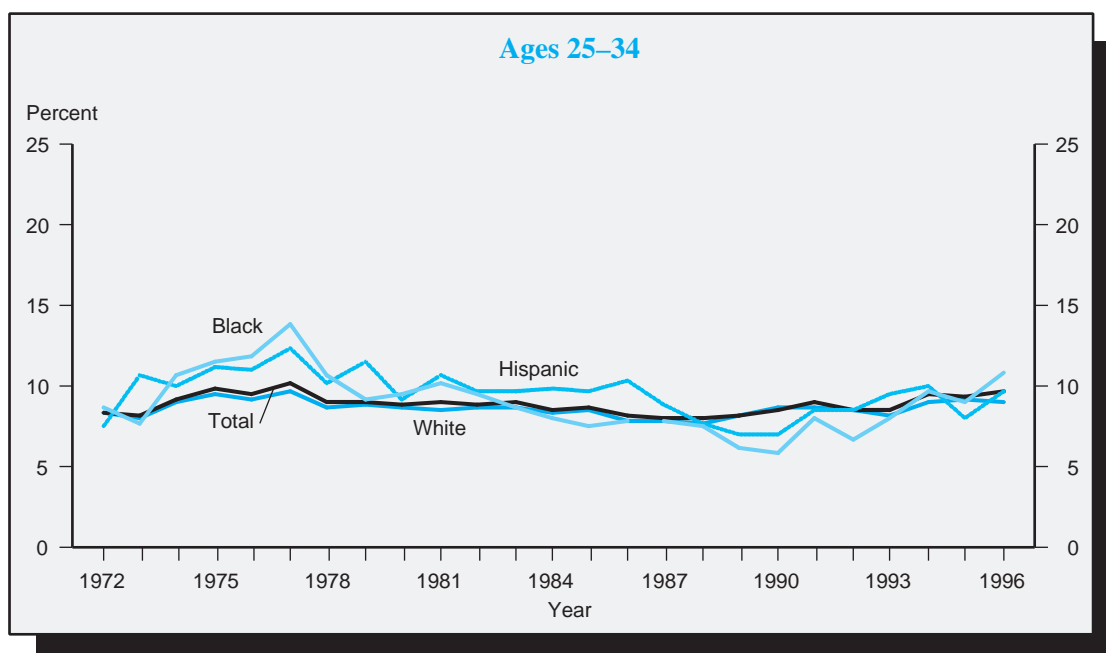
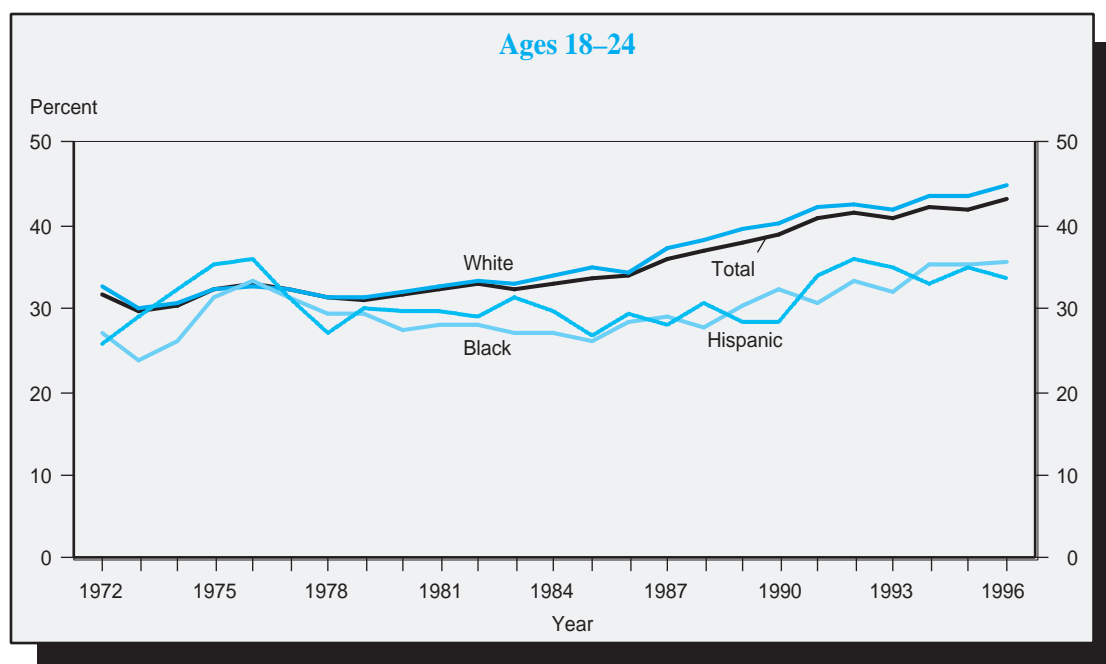
October	Ages 18–24				Ages 25–34				Age 35 or older			
	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Total	White	Black	Hispanic
1972	31.9	32.6	27.2	25.8	8.4	8.4	8.8	7.5	—	—	—	—
1974	30.5	30.6	26.2	32.3	9.3	9.1	10.8	10.0	—	—	—	—
1976	33.1	32.8	33.4	35.9	9.6	9.2	11.9	11.0	2.3	2.1	4.1	3.9
1978	31.4	31.3	29.6	27.1	9.1	8.8	10.8	10.2	2.4	2.2	3.8	4.2
1980	31.8	32.1	27.6	29.9	8.9	8.7	9.6	9.2	2.1	2.0	3.4	2.9
1982	33.0	33.3	28.1	29.2	8.9	8.7	9.6	9.7	2.2	2.1	2.7	2.9
1984	33.2	33.9	27.2	29.9	8.6	8.4	8.0	9.9	2.1	2.0	2.7	1.8
1986	34.0	34.5	28.6	29.4	8.3	7.9	7.9	10.4	2.4	2.2	3.3	3.4
1988	37.0	38.4	27.8	30.8	8.0	7.8	7.5	7.8	2.7	2.6	3.3	3.4
1990	39.0	40.3	32.4	28.4	8.6	8.7	5.9	7.0	2.7	2.6	2.9	3.9
1991	40.8	42.3	30.8	33.9	9.0	8.7	8.1	8.6	2.7	2.6	3.4	2.9
1992	41.6	42.5	33.4	36.1	8.6	8.5	6.7	8.5	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.7
1993	41.0	42.0	32.2	34.9	8.5	8.2	8.1	9.5	2.6	2.4	3.3	3.1
1994	42.2	43.6	35.5	32.9	9.5	9.1	9.7	10.1	2.7	2.5	3.5	4.3
1995	42.1	43.7	35.2	34.9	9.4	9.3	9.1	8.0	2.6	2.4	3.5	3.8
1996	43.3	45.0	35.7	33.8	9.7	9.1	10.9	9.8	2.6	2.4	3.7	3.4

— Not available.

NOTE: Included in the total but not shown separately are high school completers from other racial/ethnic groups.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys.

**Percentage of high school completers enrolled in college,
by age and race/ethnicity: October 1972–96**



NOTE: Included in the total but not shown separately are high school completers from other racial/ethnic groups.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys.

Table 9-1 Percentage of high school completers enrolled in college, by age, race/ethnicity, and type of institution: October 1973–96

October	Ages 18–24				Ages 25–34				Age 35 or older			
	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Total	White	Black	Hispanic
2-year institutions												
1973	6.3	6.3	4.6	9.8	2.1	2.0	2.3	3.6	—	—	—	—
1974	7.0	6.4	7.2	14.6	2.4	2.2	3.6	3.3	—	—	—	—
1975	8.1	7.7	9.3	13.6	3.0	2.7	5.2	5.5	—	—	—	—
1976	7.8	7.3	8.6	14.4	3.1	2.7	4.8	6.5	0.9	0.9	1.4	2.1
1977	8.0	7.5	9.8	13.9	3.1	2.8	5.5	4.6	—	—	—	—
1978	8.0	7.6	7.9	11.9	2.7	2.5	4.1	4.6	1.0	0.9	1.7	1.9
1979	7.6	7.1	8.4	13.3	2.6	2.4	3.2	4.4	1.0	0.9	1.1	1.6
1980	8.5	8.1	9.0	11.9	2.8	2.6	3.4	3.8	0.8	0.8	1.4	1.1
1981	9.0	8.6	7.9	14.3	2.7	2.5	3.2	4.2	0.9	0.8	1.5	2.6
1982	9.3	9.0	7.4	14.6	2.8	2.6	3.5	4.0	0.9	0.8	1.0	1.4
1983	8.9	8.8	7.4	12.1	2.8	2.6	3.5	5.3	0.9	0.9	0.7	1.2
1984	8.6	8.2	9.2	10.8	2.7	2.6	2.8	3.5	0.8	0.7	1.0	0.8
1985	8.6	8.3	8.4	10.5	2.8	2.7	2.7	4.1	0.9	0.8	1.1	1.1
1986	9.0	9.0	6.9	12.3	2.7	2.6	2.5	4.1	0.9	0.9	1.3	0.9
1987	9.8	9.5	8.7	12.0	2.5	2.3	2.6	3.8	0.9	0.8	1.0	1.0
1988	10.6	10.6	7.8	13.4	2.5	2.3	3.5	3.3	0.9	0.9	1.4	1.5
1989	9.9	9.5	9.1	13.2	2.5	2.4	2.4	3.3	0.9	0.9	0.9	2.0
1990	10.5	10.2	10.6	13.2	2.8	2.7	2.7	3.5	1.0	0.9	1.1	1.9
1991	11.8	11.3	11.3	14.9	3.2	3.0	3.6	3.8	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.3
1992	12.0	11.2	10.7	17.6	2.9	2.8	2.3	3.8	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.4
1993	11.7	11.5	9.4	16.2	2.7	2.4	3.4	4.2	1.0	0.9	1.4	1.5
1994	11.1	10.8	10.5	13.1	3.1	2.7	3.9	4.4	1.0	0.9	1.2	2.0
1995	10.9	10.2	11.2	13.5	2.7	2.5	3.6	3.0	0.9	0.8	1.1	1.7
1996	11.4	11.0	9.6	13.6	2.9	2.7	4.1	2.6	1.0	0.9	1.2	1.6
4-year institutions												
1973	15.6	15.9	12.5	13.3	1.9	1.8	2.4	2.5	—	—	—	—
1974	15.6	15.9	13.6	11.8	1.8	1.6	3.2	1.8	—	—	—	—
1975	15.7	15.8	15.1	15.9	2.0	1.9	2.6	2.5	—	—	—	—
1976	24.4	24.6	23.9	19.4	6.3	6.2	6.8	3.8	1.3	1.2	2.7	1.8
1977	23.1	23.4	19.9	16.8	6.6	6.4	7.6	7.2	—	—	—	—
1978	22.6	22.9	20.8	14.5	6.1	6.0	6.0	5.4	1.4	1.3	2.0	2.4
1979	22.8	23.5	19.6	15.7	6.2	6.2	5.3	6.6	1.4	1.4	2.1	1.2
1980	22.2	23.0	17.0	16.9	5.6	5.7	5.5	4.6	1.2	1.1	1.7	1.7
1981	22.4	23.1	18.8	15.0	5.8	5.6	6.2	5.7	1.4	1.3	2.2	1.3
1982	22.7	23.4	19.5	13.6	5.8	5.8	5.6	4.5	1.3	1.2	1.7	1.5
1983	22.6	23.4	18.4	17.9	5.9	5.8	4.9	4.4	1.4	1.3	1.9	1.9
1984	23.4	24.5	16.9	17.4	5.6	5.5	4.7	6.2	1.2	1.2	1.6	0.9
1985	23.8	25.3	16.4	14.8	5.6	5.7	4.1	5.3	1.4	1.3	1.8	2.1
1986	24.2	24.7	20.7	16.3	5.3	5.1	5.0	6.0	1.4	1.3	1.9	2.3
1987	26.2	27.7	20.3	16.1	5.6	5.5	5.3	5.0	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.5
1988	26.4	27.8	20.0	17.4	5.4	5.5	3.9	4.5	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.9
1989	28.1	30.1	21.4	15.1	5.8	5.9	3.8	3.8	1.6	1.6	1.2	1.7
1990	28.4	30.2	21.8	15.1	5.8	6.1	3.3	3.5	1.7	1.7	1.8	2.0
1991	29.1	30.9	19.5	19.1	5.8	5.7	4.5	4.8	1.7	1.7	2.1	1.6
1992	29.6	31.3	22.7	18.5	5.7	5.6	4.4	4.7	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.3
1993	29.3	30.6	22.8	18.7	5.8	5.8	4.7	5.2	1.6	1.5	2.0	1.6
1994	31.1	32.8	25.1	19.8	6.5	6.4	5.8	5.7	1.7	1.6	2.3	2.3
1995	31.2	33.5	24.0	21.4	6.7	6.8	5.5	5.0	1.7	1.6	2.5	2.1
1996	31.8	34.0	26.1	20.2	6.8	6.4	6.8	7.1	1.7	1.6	2.4	1.8

— Not available.

NOTE: Included in the total but not shown separately are high school completers from other racial/ethnic groups.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys.

Table S9 **Standard errors for the text table in *Indicator 9***

October	Ages 18-24				Ages 25-34				Age 35 or older			
	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Total	White	Black	Hispanic
1972	0.5	0.5	1.7	3.3	0.3	0.3	1.1	2.0	—	—	—	—
1974	0.5	0.5	1.6	3.2	0.3	0.3	1.1	2.2	—	—	—	—
1976	0.5	0.5	1.7	3.2	0.3	0.3	1.1	2.0	0.1	0.1	0.6	1.2
1978	0.4	0.5	1.6	2.9	0.2	0.3	1.0	1.8	0.1	0.1	0.6	1.2
1980	0.4	0.5	1.5	2.8	0.2	0.3	0.9	1.6	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.9
1982	0.5	0.5	1.5	2.8	0.2	0.3	0.9	1.6	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.9
1984	0.5	0.5	1.5	2.8	0.2	0.2	0.8	1.6	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.6
1986	0.5	0.6	1.5	2.7	0.2	0.2	0.8	1.5	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.8
1988	0.6	0.6	1.7	3.3	0.2	0.3	0.8	1.5	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.9
1990	0.5	0.6	1.7	2.8	0.2	0.3	0.7	1.3	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.8
1991	0.6	0.6	1.7	2.9	0.2	0.3	0.8	1.4	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.7
1992	0.6	0.6	1.7	2.9	0.2	0.3	0.7	1.4	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.7
1993	0.6	0.7	1.7	2.8	0.2	0.3	0.8	1.4	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.7
1994	0.6	0.7	1.7	2.7	0.2	0.3	0.8	1.4	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.8
1995	0.6	0.7	1.7	2.6	0.2	0.3	0.8	1.2	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.7
1996	0.6	0.7	1.8	2.8	0.3	0.3	0.9	1.4	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.7

— Not available.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys.